

GETTING THINGS DONE 1

INTRODUCTION

Not all the items we will talk about are particularly related to just saving time. Most of the information deals with "How do you get better results with less work." That is why I refer to them as time management principles. It is not principles for bookkeeping or for managing a team. It has to do with, how do you get better results with less time?

I. AFTER ACTION REPORT

At the conclusion of every conference or annual meeting which you have organized, it is a good idea to make a report. You sit down in a corner and make two lists. (1) You make a list of everything you did right: everything you organized right, everything you planned right, everything that went right. What do you think you are going to write on the other list? (2) All right, everything you did wrong: you believed the cook would make a meal, and she did not. So you make a list of all the things you did not do right. You began late; you forgot to get gasoline; or you did some other things that just did not go right.

The military always make a list like this. It is called an "After Action _____." Every time you do a significant task that maybe in the future you are going to do again, you should make a report like that. Why is that important? It is important because right after the action, your mind is still oriented to what you have done. And you say to each other, "Oh, wasn't this nice? Wasn't that wonderful? Didn't that go good? Too bad we didn't do this. Too bad we forgot about that. Let us think some more about this some other time." Then you go away. Six months later you have to do the same thing again, and you say, "Do you remember what we did wrong last time?" He says, "Oh, I cannot remember it either." And you make the same mistakes.

So, let us say you organized and held a conference in another church. You learned a lot, but your memory is very treacherous. A year from now you will have forgotten the valuable lessons you have learned this time, including your suggestions on how to do it better next time and how to save time and energy. After finishing the conference before you get in the car, before you go home, you sit down for about ten minutes and write an after action report. You take two sheets of paper and you write down on one all the things that went good and how you did it. And on the other sheet you write all the things you are going to do better next time.

Your brief written record of what happened and why, including recommendations for how to do it better and more quickly next time, can save a lot of _____ and _____. Then you put it in a file and mark it with a name and a date. Next time when you need to plan a conference, you read these two sheets of paper first. It saves a lot of time and a lot of mistakes.

II. BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION - PREVENTING THE MISUSE OF TIME

Misuse of time is seldom an isolated incident. It usually involves a pattern of behavior that is well established. Many of us have some sort of a bad habit that wastes lots of time. This is the area that you want to change. Now because you have a bad habit that has been established over many years, it will be rather difficult to change it. If you want to live a new lifestyle, it will take three months to change your behavior pattern. If you practice for less than _____, you will not succeed. There are two ways to change your behavior patterns.

A. Force

You can force yourself into a new system. It however is difficult, and many people give up after a while because it involves force. It involves fighting against what you really want to do. You want to go to bed a

little bit earlier at night, or you want to get up a little bit earlier in the morning. And now you are going to change some of these things. You do it for a week, then you miss. You do it again for several days, you miss a couple of times, and before the month is over, you return to doing it as you have always done it.

B. Reshaping

The other system, which works better, involves reshaping your behavior through a system of rewards. Coming to an LTS workshop is difficult, but if I gave you a reward of \$200 you would probably come every week! This system is based on giving yourself a small _____. It is a normal human reaction to want to do something when we are rewarded for it. Your children want to do something for you if you tell them, "Oh, thank you! That was nice. That was a good help." You like to go and visit your grandparents because they always give you a can of tomatoes, or some honey, or something like that.

Let us say you are struggling with your homework. You could use this method of giving yourself a reward to help. You make a decision that every day next week you are going to do some of your homework assignments. Next week, every day. And at the end of each day, you give yourself a little reward. You say, "When I have worked on my homework on Monday evening, I am going to eat a piece of cake." Or, "When I am finished on Tuesday evening, I am going to take some candies in my pocket along to work for the next day." Maybe you have something else you like, that is pleasant for you.



Let us say, maybe you do your homework real late in the evening, and you are tired. Now you decide you are going to do it early in the evening. "And when I am finished at nine o'clock, I am going to take my favorite music cassette, and I am just going to sit and listen and enjoy this special music." You think it is funny, but your chances of _____ will be much greater.

Who says that only a teacher can give an incentive, or only a mother can give an encouragement. These principles are recommended by the man who was an advisor to America's senators. It was his job to make the senators successful. Afterwards he was hired by some of the biggest companies in America to help their presidents and leaders be successful. I don't think he is just telling us a joke.

Why can you not give yourself a little gift? Let us say you want a nice automatic pencil for yourself. So, you say, "I will buy this pencil on Saturday if I have worked every day for one hour on my homework for the CBLT course." You plan to do that. Otherwise maybe you would not buy it. You would like it, but you would not buy it. Now you have already done your homework Monday evening, you have done it Tuesday evening, and now it is Wednesday evening. So you tell yourself, "Well, I promised myself I was going to buy this special pencil. I still want that pencil, so I think I better get started now." And you go into another room and do your homework. Many, many people have found that giving themselves a little present is a very successful method of behavior modification.

Listen to this, "Any behavior that is followed by something pleasant tends to be reinforced, and is more likely to happen again." You can get this reinforcement from others, but you can also reinforce your own behavior by giving yourself some kind of token reward.

When trying to reshape your behavior, you must remember two things:

1. _____ **yourself is not nearly as effective as giving yourself a reward.**

When you are angry with yourself, you say, "I have already tried it a hundred times and I have failed again. I am bad, and I cannot do it." It does not do very much.

Giving yourself a reward is much, much more successful. And as adults it does not have to be something big. Maybe it is a box of expensive chocolates, maybe you like expensive chocolates. And you say, "Every day when I have finished working one hour on my homework, I am going to get one of these nice chocolates."

2. **You must reward yourself _____ small success.**

I can see that man is really interested in this idea. He is already planning a great thing. He says, "I am going to do all the homework lectures for the next six months for all the LTS workshops and then I'll buy myself a brand new cassette player." Do you think he will get this new cassette player? There is little chance! The success is in giving yourself a **little** reward for a small step, a small improvement. That is where the success is. That is important.



III. BOTTLENECKS

A. Failure to Act/Inform



Bottlenecks can occur in any organization where a key person fails to take an essential _____. In one school where we had a LTS workshop the director failed to take an action and inform the caretaker. As a result one person (the caretaker) stopped over one hundred people from coming inside. This bottleneck problem is the problem of key leaders. It is a time problem of the biggest magnitude: it wastes a tremendous amount of time. One leader can waste the time of a large group of people.

B. Indecision

Typical bottlenecks are caused by executives who refuse to say "yes" or "no" to a new idea. They want to think more about it. They want more information. And a whole week has gone by and nobody has done anything.

C. Unnecessary Demands

Another leader is a bureaucrat who demands unnecessary paperwork before approving a project. Most people do not realize how much they thwart the efforts of subordinates and coworkers by failing to respect their time _____.

D. Too Much Work

A bottleneck can result, for instance, from a person who has too much work. He is just too busy. And he does not have time to do this, or does not have time to do that, and it all lays there on his desk. In the meantime other people are waiting for an answer before they can do their work.

E. Not Enough Work

But it can also result from not having enough to do. Those kind of people usually horde paperwork, want to review something once more, and that kind of thing. The solution for something like that is to give them more work and set deadlines. This is one of the _____ time management ideas. Whenever you ask somebody to do something for you, always give them a date. "Can you read the book of Isaiah and tell me what you think of it on Saturday evening?"

One time an unbeliever told me he wanted to be saved. He wanted to become a believer. It was October. He said, "I am going to get saved before Christmas." So, I was excited. Christmas came, but nothing happened. Next Christmas, nothing. But five Christmases later, yes, he got saved. He became a believer. I should have set a concrete date. I should have said, "Christmas this year?" Always give a date. It is the secret to making other people successful.

There's a common belief that tension is bad, that quiet and tranquillity are goals for which we should strive. Nonsense. Without tension nothing gets done.

F. Clogged Pipeline

Perhaps the pipeline is clogged. There is a dirt in the pipeline. The assistant says, "Well, I have not heard from the director yet. So I cannot tell you." The director says, "Well, the bookkeeper has not given me the report, so I could not tell the assistant." Again, the answer is often to give these people more work, with a

If you are the victim of this kind of a problem because there is bureaucracy in your system, or because you have a boss who is not very intelligent about his business, you do not have to hang your head and say, "Well, yes. In our province that is just the way it is." No, you need to try to change it. You can squawk about it. Make a lot of noise, like a goose. Quack, quack, quack, quack. Next time you can begin to remind. "Did you do that already? Oh, you did not do that yet. When are you going to do it? Can I come back tomorrow for it?" Remind and challenge. "Come on! You can do it! You want to be a good leader do you not? What am I going to say to the others? He did not do his job?" You can remind him. "Remember, I asked you last week... Um, actually I asked you twice last week. If you do not have it for me right now I will phone tomorrow again. I have got to have it by Saturday, absolutely." So, you can remind people. You can phone people.

I was doing missionary work in Alaska one time, and there a bad incident happened with some bandits. And they did not want to talk to my colleague about their problem. He said, "That is no problem. I will tie up their telephone so they cannot use it at all." So, he dialed their number, and they did not want to talk to him, so they did not answer. So, he laid his receiver down, and did his other work. And he would hear, "Beep, beep, beep." And then it would stop. He quickly dialed their number again. He did that a whole day. Nobody could phone there because he had the telephone totally tied up.

You can _____ memos: "This is my fourth request." Yes, yes! You can do that. **Your leaders are obligated to make you successful!** When you are a leader, you are obligated to make your students successful!

Here is what you need to remember: to get anything done in this world, you often must be willing to be a bit obnoxious. Now Sasha and I have had many good times already. But once or so I have said, "Sasha!"

If you are a leader, the place to look for bottlenecks is on your desk. In the pile of papers that are laying there, that different people have given you, and are waiting for an answer. Maybe you have a "to do" list. A week ago it had two points. Now it has ten. Next week there will be fifteen. Hey, if you are the leader, you need to take care of your own stuff. Get those things that you need to do done, or give them to somebody else to do. Now remember, where is the neck of the bottle? It is on the top. That is right. That's where the leader is. So the factory worker down here, he does not have that problem. Many of you are young. If you want to become a successful leader here in your province, you had better learn how to avoid being a

IV. BREAKS

A lot of people have much work to do, and they want to work long periods of time. Working a long period of time without taking a break is not an effective use of your time. The longer you work, the less things you produce per minute or per hour. Energy decreases, boredom sets in, and physical stress and tension accumulate when a person stays too long with one thing. Irritability, chronic fatigue, headache, anxiety, and apathy: they can all be caused by the failure to produce a change of pace during your working day.

You need to learn to have _____ breaks. Every hour, minimum. Every thirty minutes is even better. If you study for 25 minutes and take a five minute break, you study much more than what you would do if you continued studying one hour, and longer and longer. A break does not always need to be a rest break. It can be simply doing something else. You have been sitting down, studying, thinking. Now you are going to do something physical for fifteen minutes or so. What you need is a relief from the tension. Sometimes just getting up and walking around if you do a sitting down job is very helpful. I have some colleagues; they study standing up because that way they can change from sitting down to standing up and it is a different position for their bodies. Doing some special exercise program for five minutes is fantastic.

Merely resting, of course, is usually the best thing. You should think of it as a time of restoration, not as a poor use of your time. Not only will it increase your efficiency, it will also relieve tension which will be a long time health benefit.



V. BRIEF CASE

If you are an executive, or maybe a young man and you are going to be an executive, it means that sometimes you have to take some work home from the office and do some things in the evening at home. However, if you frequently take things home from the office it shows there is something wrong. You may have one of three problems:

[Now you may think, "I do not work in an office: I do not have that problem." I am talking in the hope that next September you will be a full-time course coach, director or assistant leader in a CBLT Center. Maybe you are going to quit your job and start being a full time pastor. If so, you are going to have these problems that I am talking about.]

Three possible problems cause people to take too much work home:

A. They are trying to do _____ things themselves.

There are other people who can do things. There are people who want to serve Jesus: who want to do something for Jesus. But you do not trust them. You think, "Well, I better do it myself." So you do everything yourself.

B. You have not organized your time at your job properly, effectively.

You talk on the telephone and there are interruptions, and you do not have a proper schedule.

C. You are having a _____ complex.

You are a young man, just becoming a leader, and you want to look important. So every evening you take boxes full of work home because you have so much work to do. You have a martyr's complex. You have to tell everybody, "Oh, I cannot! Look at all the work I have to do."

Let me give you a few reasons why it is wrong to take a lot of work home from your job:

- 1) You need to get away from your work at the end of the day, both mentally and physically.
- 2) *The time spent working at home is counterproductive*, draining your energies, and _____ you from your family.
- 3) The homework habit can have a negative effect on your work time in the office.

Because after a while you begin to think, "Oh well, if I do not get it done now I will do it at home tonight." So now you are beginning to waste your time at work and do everything at home.

VI. CATEGORIES OF TIME USE

Actions can be broken down into five categories as follows:

A. Important and urgent.

These are the tasks that must be done. Either immediately or in the very near future. For example you are coming back to the next CBLT seminar, and either you have your homework ready or you do not have it ready. So it becomes important and urgent. Because of its urgency and importance, it takes precedence over everything else. It is not here where we find our time management problems.

B. Important but not urgent

Attention to this category is what divides _____ individuals from ineffective ones.

Most of the really important things in our lives are not urgent. They can be done now or later. In many cases they can be postponed forever, and in too many cases they are. These are the things we "never get around to."

Examples: that special course you want to take to upgrade your professional skills; that new project you would like to suggest to your boss after you find time to do the preliminary fact-finding; that article you've been meaning to write; that diet you've intended to begin; that annual medical checkup you've planned to get for the past three years; that visit to a lawyer to have your will drawn up; that retirement program you've been planning to establish.

All of these tasks have one thing in common: despite their importance, affecting as they do your health, your wealth, and your family's welfare, they will be postponed indefinitely unless you yourself initiate action. If your activities are keyed to other people's priorities, or to system imposed deadlines that make things "urgent" you will never get around to your own priorities.

C. Urgent but not Important

In this category are those things that clamor for immediate action, but that we would assign a low priority if we examined them _____.

For example, someone asks you to chair a fund drive or to give a speech or to attend a meeting. You might consider each of these a low priority, but someone is standing in front of you waiting for an answer and you accept because you cannot think of a graceful way to decline. Then, because these tasks have built-in time limits, they get done, while Category 2 items get moved to the back burner.

D. Busy Work

There are many tasks that are marginally worth doing but are neither urgent nor important. We often do them ahead of more important things because they are _____ they provide a feeling of activity and accomplishment while giving us an excuse to put off tackling those Category 2 tasks, which have a far greater benefit.

One aerospace executive, for example, told of coming to his office the previous Saturday morning to do some work he had been postponing. He began by organizing the materials on his desk. Having done so, he decided that while he was at it he might as well straighten up the desk drawers. He spent the rest of the morning reorganizing drawers and files.

"I left the office feeling vaguely disappointed that I hadn't accomplished what I went in for," he said, "but I consoled myself with the thought that I had been very busy doing some worthwhile things. I was playing games with myself working on low-priority tasks, to give myself an excuse for further delay on the far more essential task I originally had assigned myself."

If you find time constantly being diverted by minutiae, try following the advice in the section on procrastination.

E. Wasted Time

The definition of wasted time is subjective, of course. Ernest Hemingway is quoted as having defined "immoral" as "anything you feel bad after." I don't know whether that definition will stand up to theological scrutiny, but I do think it can be applied to wasted time. Television viewing, for example, can be well spent if we come away feeling that we have been enlightened or entertained. But if afterward, we feel that the time would have been better spent with the family or reading a good book, then we can chalk up that time as wasted.

People who scramble madly to get control of their time often look _____ for things in this category upon which to blame their inefficiency. I am convinced, however, that with most people this is not where the problem lies. It lies rather with allocating too much time to things in Categories 3 and 4 rather than to those in Category 2.

Now, unless these situations all develop simultaneously (God forbid!) you can cope with them. Category 2, because of its importance, takes precedence over everything else. It is here that we find our time management problems. We must learn to give this category top priority. Procrastination here MUST be eliminated.

CONCLUSION

In closing here are some time-saving tips to Get Things Done.

For future success make an after action report now.

Make a list of everything you did right, then of what you did wrong.

If you want success be nice to yourself. Reward yourself!

Are you a Bottleneck? One leader can waste the time of a large group of people.

Without tension nothing gets done!

Three questions to ask when you feel overly busy:

Am I trying to do too many things myself?

Am I not organized in my ministry?

Am I alienated from my family?

The most difficult management category is 'important but not urgent'.

God my brothers has long range plans. All the way from eternity past to eternity future. God has an absolutely beautiful plan for each of us as well. Satan has chaos in store for us. So our problems and frustrations can give us an indication of how close our spiritual walk is with our Lord. He said my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Yet many of us don't feel that way about our precious Savior. I hope you will imitate the leadership style of Jesus Christ.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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